

Restaurant Frequently Asked Questions

What do I need to do if I want to open a restaurant or business that sells food?

You will need to check with the Environmental Health Office to see if the type of food service will require a permit. If so, you will be asked to submit an application, floor plan and specifications for the kitchen equipment. There may be other agencies, such as the building inspections office and the fire marshal, that will also need to be involved.

How are restaurant grades determined?

Each establishment that has a restaurant permit must be evaluated by a Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS) from the health department. The REHS makes an unannounced inspection to evaluate the restaurant for compliance with the regulations. The focus of the inspection is to ensure that the operation is practicing safe food preparation methods including refrigeration temperatures, hot-holding temperatures, cooking temperatures and cooling methods, food worker hygiene, and safe food sources. Any rule violations are summarized on an inspection sheet, and an overall score is computed. A perfect score is 100 percent. The inspection grades are then posted for public viewing at the establishment and can also be seen on the Internet.

How often are restaurants graded?

In years past, restaurants were inspected four times per year. Beginning in 2007, a major change recognized that some businesses did not require inspections that often because of the nature of their menu and complexity of the food operations. Inspection frequency is now based on risk factors that require anywhere from 4 inspections to 1 inspection per year. These risk factors are based on cooking temperature, holding temperature, approved food sources and food handling practices that are essential for preventing foodborne disease.

Does everyone working in a restaurant have to wear gloves?

The rules governing foodhandling establishments require employees preparing food to wear disposable gloves or create a barrier between their hands and ready to eat food (deli paper, tongs, utensils,..). In either case, they must wash their hands prior to preparing the food.

Do I need a permit from the Health Department to serve ice cream or to open a bakery?

Businesses that serve only ice cream, pre-packaged products or bakery items do NOT need a Health Department permit but must get a permit from the [NC Department of Agriculture](#) .

I want to sell food at a street event. What is required?

You will need to check with the event organizer first to get information from her or him regarding food sales. You will be filling out and submitting an application that gives details on your food booth. If you are already a permitted Mobile Food Unit, you will need to fill out an application, but will not need to pay the fee. Vendors who are not already permitted as a Mobile Food Unit or who are not a tax exempt group will need to submit an application with a fee to the event organizer who will turn the applications in to Environmental Health. The applications are required to be turned in 15 days prior to the date of the event. Our office will inspect your food booth on the day of the event before the scheduled opening.